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Some Objections to Socialism Considered and Answered.



By "TATTLER" (of "Justice").

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ONE PENNY.



PREFACE.

I have long been of opinion that the Editor of "Justice" was deserving of reproach for not insisting upon "Tattler" publishing some of his writings in pamphlet form. Having had the privilege of corresponding with "Tattler" for close upon a quarter of a century, I was delighted when he wrote me stating that his notes on Mr. Charles Stanton Devas's brochure, entitled "Plain Words on Socialism," would appear in the form of a pamphlet. I at once congratulated him on this decision, adding that I trusted this one would prove to be but the first of a series.

With that urbanity which our comrade usually exhibits in his writings, he wrote back insisting upon my writing a short preface to what he described as his maiden effort. This was the last honour I expected, and I tried to evade the responsibility by telling him that his writing would speak for itself. However, he proved insistent, and so I had to succumb to his blandishments.

Those who have for years read "Tattler's" notes in "Justice" on current events must have been struck, I am sure, with his fine logical acumen, combined with the sweet reasonableness of his methods of controversy. "Tattler" has always scrupulously endeavoured to state the case of his opponent fairly, before proceeding to demolish him in argument. So successful has "Tattler" been in his encounters with the enemy, that readers of "Justice" will agree with me that it has fallen to the lot of few writers to win so many victories with the pen. Unfortunately, most writers who attack Socialism know little of the subject they criticise. Mr. Devas, however, as "Tattler" says, has taken the

trouble to inform himself on what Socialists think, and, therefore, the comments of "Tattler" will be read with more than usual interest.

Comrade "Tattler," like Socialists in common, loves controversy. He would, I believe, only be too glad to take on a discussion with any distinguished person, from the Prime Minister down to the President of the Local Government Board. His trouble is that they will not engage. Mr. Devas having the temerity to write some plain words against Socialism, comrade "Tattler," upon receiving the booklet from the Editor of "Justice," immediately took up the cudgels on behalf of Socialism. I regret exceedingly that Mr. Devas did not attempt to make out a case against Socialism on its own merits instead of falling back on the old theological argument that all Socialists are Atheists, and must be immoral. However, he meets with his deserts from the pen of "Tattler," and I hope all comrades will do their best to circulate this pamphlet among their non-Socialist friends. In conclusion, I congratulate our comrade upon his first venture, and trust that its success will encourage him to issue many others. He has hidden, too long, his light under a bushel.

A. P. HAZELL.

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Some Objections to Socialism Considered and Answered.

It is so seldom that one meets with any reasoned opposition to Socialism—or any opposition at all, indeed, which is not so silly as to be absolutely beneath notice—that I was pleased to read a little pamphlet against Socialism which has been issued by the Catholic Truth Society of Scotland. It is entitled, “Plain Words on Socialism,” by Charles Stanton Devas, M.A. Oxon, and the author has evidently, unlike most of our opponents, taken the trouble to learn something of his subject before writing about it. He might have avoided some errors if he had known a little more, but that by the way.

I readily accept his definition of Socialism as meaning “a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments of producing wealth by, and in the interests of, the whole community.” I agree, also, with his objection to confusing Socialism, as is too often done by both its friends and enemies, with mere Labourism or measures of social reform.

We therefore start fair, on common ground, to consider the criticisms directed by Mr. Devas against Socialism as already defined. He begins by claiming that “a vast body of men, every whit as alive as the Socialists to the evils of our society, every whit as eager to remedy them, are seeking some practical remedy, not an impractical utopia.”

That is a statement which I imagine no Socialist would, for a moment, attempt to deny. On the contrary, I should think that every Socialist would not only admit this, but would go further, and say that everybody, or at least the great majority of people, would be very glad, indeed, to find a remedy for the evils of our society. The fact, however, that there is, and has been for generations, vast numbers of men who have been seeking for “some practical remedy,” other than Socialism, for “the evils of our society,” and have sought diligently and with tears, and have sought in vain, is an argument for Socialism, and not against it, and goes to support the Socialist contention that there is “no

choice between Socialism on the one side and unchristian individualism on the other."

Our author, however, contends that "such an alternative might have seemed plausible in mid-nineteenth century at the time of the Chartists, but is not plausible now, since for more than fifty years 'business principles' of self-regarding individuals have been checked, pruned, amended by the two great forces of combination and legislation; a whole code of elaborate factory laws has grown up, backed by sanitary laws, merchant shipping laws, and workmen's compensation laws; and a network of trade unions and friendly societies of all sorts . . . has simultaneously grown up, and has reached such an extent that, for example, the British co-operative societies comprise, if we include wives and children, some eight million souls, not to speak of the vast accumulated funds and the annual trade of some ninety million pounds." All of which is perfectly true, and all of which eloquently demonstrates the fleeting effect of mere "social reform" and the utter futility of these so-called practical remedies.

Fifty years ago our opponents could reasonably say, "Don't talk or think about Socialism; try some other and more 'practical' remedy. Try factory legislation, sanitary laws, merchant shipping laws, and workmen's compensation laws. Try trade unions, friendly societies and co-operation, and then you will see there is no need for Socialism; 'the evils of our society' will disappear." But now we have tried all these "practical remedies," and where are we? The universally deplored "evils of our society" are more in evidence than ever before. The wealth of the rich has increased by leaps and bounds, while the poor, if they have not become poorer, have at any rate grown no richer, so that the disproportion between rich and poor has grown with the increase in wealth; sanitation may have improved, but the overcrowding of our great slum cities was never so great as now; never has the rural population been so small in proportion to the town dwellers; the unemployed increase in numbers, and unemployment has ceased to be exceptional, and has become chronic; 13,000,000 of people—a third of our population—are existing on, or below, the poverty line, and our indoor paupers have doubled in numbers and form as large a proportion of the population as they did fifty years ago. What a splendid record of achievement for these "practical remedies" so exultantly paraded by Mr. Devas. Surely we have almost exhausted the possibilities of error, and the demonstrated futility of these various "practical remedies" must have convinced thousands that the only real remedy lies in Socialism.

But our author's faith in tinkering reforms appears to be inexhaustible. He suggests that instead of trusting in "the untried utopia of Collectivism," we should "Put in force the teaching of the late Pope's encyclical, that the State is bound to prevent usury,

monopoly, overwork, underpay; that workmen's associations in a variety of forms are not merely to be permitted but zealously promoted; that as far as possible small owners of property, especially peasant proprietors, are to be multiplied, that all the organs of conciliation are to be strengthened, and all classes and conditions of men to join in the work of social reform, not one only, but all; work and prayer, the organised State and the organised Church, the private employer and the private philanthropist, associations of employers and associations of employed working in co-operation—put all this in force, adopt this gospel of peace, and we shall not need the gospel of social war."

That all sounds very pretty; but what does it amount to but mere empty sentiment? It is too late in the day to appeal to Papal Encyclicals and to the organised State and the organised Church to "prevent usury, monopoly and overwork." Church and State are not institutions of yesterday, and the Fathers of the Church fulminated against usury long before the great industrial revolution and the growth of modern capitalist monopoly. But what effect have all their impeachments and ordinances had on the inexorable consequences of economic evolution? Absolutely none. The Sermon on the Mount was preached eighteen centuries before the great industrial revolution, but it did not prevent the horrors of that terrible period, nor did it eliminate the "evils of our society" which, in the middle of the last century, according to Mr. Devas, were bad enough to make Socialism appear plausible as the only alternative.

What is the use of still preaching this "gospel of peace" in the midst of the actualities of the class war? There is no "gospel of social war." Social war is a fact to be recognised, not a gospel to be preached. It is the terrible, inevitable, inexorable consequence of the class ownership of the means of production, and will continue so long as that class ownership exists, no matter how loyally, lovingly, or persistently, good, well-intentioned people preach the "gospel of peace." "Usury, monopoly, overwork, underpay," are all consequences of the social antagonism and injustice involved by this class ownership, and no fulminations of Father Peter and no ordinances of Church or State will remove the consequences while the cause remains.

Mr. Devas, in support of his plea for social reform as against Socialism, quotes Dr. Stang, the Catholic Bishop of Fall River, Massachusetts, as follows: "The State should not only protect private ownership as something sacred and inviolable, but its policy should be to induce as many people as possible to become owners." To this I would say that it is a pity the Right Reverend Father in God did not clearly define private ownership. He might then have explained how it would be possible to make the great means of production—a railway, for instance, or a mine, an automatic factory, or a mammoth store—private property in any

intelligible sense of the term. And, further, seeing that all industries are assuming the form of monopolies, and it is impossible for any number of people to have "private ownership" in these except as collective shareholders, he might have explained how "as many people as possible" could "become owners," except on the basis of complete social ownership.

The right reverend Bishop is of opinion that "the working man should be encouraged to acquire land and put up his own house on it." He should be informed that the factory operatives of Lancashire and Yorkshire have improved upon that. There, I am informed, every man can, if he chooses—and many do—own three houses, and live in one of them on the rent he draws for the other two.

But Dr. Stang says that "a man will take more interest in land which is his own than in property which belongs to another." He will certainly have to *give* more interest if the property belongs to another, there is no doubt about that. But if the Bishop's theory is correct, one wonders why landlords and farmers, instead of getting labourers to work their land, don't work it themselves or else give it to the labourers. The present arrangement, by which the greatest interest in the property, and the greatest industry in cultivating and developing it, is shown by the man who does not own it, appears to work very well for the present proprietors.

Mr. Devas's Bishop is a very amusing person. I don't know when a prelate has afforded me so much entertainment. Following up the above words of wisdom, he says: "The employer has no right to say to the working man, 'I can give whatever wages I please; if you are not satisfied with what I offer you can seek employment elsewhere.' He cannot deprive the working man of his proper and just share in the product."

"No right," indeed! Let the worthy Bishop tell that to the marines, or rather to the employer. He would soon get his answer. The employer has the greatest of all rights to say this to the working man—might. And the proof thereof is that that is precisely what he does say to the working man. Not in so many words, of course; the employer is in much too strong a position for it to be necessary to express this in words. He does not go seeking the working man. On the contrary, it is the working man who runs after the employer, to sell his services for almost any price he can get that will save him from starvation. He is forced, not by anything the employer may say to him, but by the sheer stress of circumstances, to accept the conditions offered by the employer. The latter is not governed by any ethical consideration of what he has a right to do. Here is labour going begging for employment; the very productivity of labour itself insures that the supply shall always be in excess of the demand, and it is an economic law that where the supply exceeds the demand prices fall. The employer would be very foolish not to get his labour

cheap when it is practically thrust upon him by circumstances over which he, individually, has little, if any, more control than the workman.

But, says the good Bishop, "He *cannot* deprive the working man of his proper and just share in the product." "How *could* you, Pat, how *could* you hit him?" asked an English visitor to Donnybrook fair, of his companion, who had just dealt a resounding thwack with his shillelagh on the head of an inoffending bystander. "How could I hit him, is it?" retorted Pat, "be-gorrah, how could I miss him?"

The employer *cannot*, says the good Bishop, deprive the working man of his proper and just share. I would ask how, under existing circumstances, he can avoid doing so?

What is the workingman's "proper and just share in the product"? One would say that this proper and just share would be the equivalent of the value which the working man contributes to the product. But that is the merely ethical view; and if the working man, and every working man, received the full equivalent of the total value he contributes to the product, where would the profit of the employer come from, and where would be his inducement to give the working man employment? The employer does not employ working men for fun. He does not undertake all the trouble, worry, anxiety and risk of a business simply for amusement or to "find work" for the lazy, improvident, shiftless and thriftless working man. He does all this in order to make a profit, and his profit is drawn from the surplus value which constitutes the difference between the value which the workman produces and that which he receives. In other words, it is the result of unpaid labour; it is the produce of the working man for which the latter receives no equivalent. If he received his proper and just share, if the capitalist *could* not deprive him of this, then the capitalist could make no profit.

Fortunately for the employer, however, and in spite of the worthy Bishop's declaration to the contrary, the employer both can and does, by virtue of his position as owner of the tools and raw material, deprive the workman of his "proper and just share."

Even the Bishop, however, does not go so far as to say that the working man should have all he earns—the only "proper and just share." Not at all. He simply says that he believes "with John Mitchell (an American trade unionist leader) that every man should have enough to keep his family, educate his children, and lay a little aside for the future. Six hundred dollars a year is the least that should be paid the unskilled common labourer. . . . I think every man should have a house with, at least, six rooms. He should have a bathroom, a parlour, dining room, kitchen, and enough bedrooms for decency and comfort. He should have

carpets, books, and sufficient furniture to make his home comfortable and bright. He should have good food, and should keep his children in school, and at the same time should be able to lay aside something for old age and sickness."

That is the good Bishop's idea of the working man's—even the "unskilled, common labourer's"—"proper and just share in the product." But what is the relation between these things and the product? That is the question. They may amount to much more than the total product, in which case the working man certainly could not claim them as his "proper and just share." On the other hand, they might fall far short of the total product, in which case the working man in full enjoyment of all these would not be getting his "proper and just share."

That, however, is the good Bishop's view of what a working man should have. But why should he? That, again, is the question. Is it so written in the bond? On what compulsion must the employer give the working man all these things when he can get him to labour for less? The natural return to labour, the natural wages of labour, say the economists, is the cost of subsistence of the labourer. "All that a man hath will he give for his life," and so the free workman, with no tools, materials, or food at his command, with only one possession, his labour power, at his disposal, is glad to sell that, day by day, week by week, month by month, and year by year, all his life through, for a bare livelihood. He would be glad to get more; but the competition of others in the same plight as himself operates to keep wages down to their "natural" level, and this, which is good for the employer in that it means greater profit, seeing that the smaller the return to labour the greater the profit, is also good for him in that it keeps the worker so poor that he is always eager to work. If he had all the good things the Bishop thinks he should have, he would not only need more wages, he would also require more leisure in which to read his books and to enjoy the comforts of his home. Now, with a comfortless home in a hovel, with no means of recreation beyond the tap-room and no money to spend there, the workshop, the factory, or the coal-pit offers a welcome relief from universal wretchedness, and so everything works together for the good of the master class.

But although Mr. Devas opposes social reform to Socialism, talks of the wonders that have been achieved by combination and legislation in the elimination of the evils of society, and quotes approvingly the suggestions of Bishop Stang, to which I have already referred, as to the workman's "just and proper share," he appears to regard these latter as too revolutionary. He says: "You may not all agree with the whole programme of Bishop Stang—indeed, *I hesitate myself before his high standard of*

house accommodation—but you will allow it is well worthy of attention.”

Thus, while Mr. Devas sets out to show that there is no need for Socialism, because “a whole code of elaborate factory laws has grown up, backed by sanitary laws, and workmen’s compensation laws . . . and has reached such an extent,” etc.; yet, nevertheless, he “hesitates” before Bishop Stang’s suggestion that a mere working man “should have a bath-room, a parlour, dining-room, kitchen, and enough bedrooms for decency and comfort.”

And Mr. Devas is right. Such a “high standard” is incompatible with the position of a working-man under the capitalist system. What does the working man, a mere wage-slave, want with a bath-room? Is he not one of the great unwashed? Is it not necessary, for the profit of his master, that he should do work which makes him dirty, and covers him with filth and grime? If he should have a bath-room, and learn to wash and be clean, he might contract habits of cleanliness. He might regard with repugnance the avocation which covered him with filth and grime, and might conclude that such employment was worth a higher wage than the beggarly pittance he at present receives. A bath-room, indeed!

And a parlour! What would a working man want with a parlour? Why, even advanced social reformers like the L.C.C. “Progressives” sneer at the workman’s modest parlour as a silly domestic museum and an utter waste of house room. While as for a dining-room and kitchen; in these days of plain and simple living for the working-classes, in which it is understood that the workman does not dine but simply stokes, both dining-room and kitchen would be quite useless as part of a working man’s dwelling.

Then, “enough bedrooms for decency and comfort.” That is manifestly absurd. What has a workman to do with either decency or comfort? His function, as a workman, is to work. If his bedrooms were decent and comfortable, the workshop and the factory would have less attractions for him. The business of the working man is to work, and to work for sufficient to keep him alive so that he can go on working. All that is added thereunto may conduce to decency and comfort, but is calculated to slacken his avidity for work. No wonder Mr. Devas hesitates before such a “high standard of house accommodation,” as is by no means necessary to a working man when regarded in his proper status as a mere beast of burden or animated machine.

Mr. Devas is at pains to show, what no Socialist would dispute, that mere municipalism is not Socialism. Among men who have done something for municipal enterprise he places Dr. Lueger, the fanatical anti-Semitic burgomaster of Vienna. That

anti-Socialists like Dr. Lueger have had to champion municipalism shows nothing except the utter failure of private enterprise. These men have had to admit, in spite of themselves, that necessary public work was not being carried out by private enterprise, and that if it were to be done at all, it must be done by collective public effort. This is a concession to Socialist doctrine which circumstances have compelled them reluctantly to make. But with all their municipalism they have not yet touched the real root of the social problem, which still remains as urgent as ever.

Then Mr. Devas gives us, as an illustration of what, as he says, "might be mis-called 'village Socialism,'" the condition of the tenants of the great monastery of Durham in the fifteenth century, with their common mill and common oven, their common smithy and extensive co-operation. That, of course, was not Socialism, but we cannot go back to such village communism. We have to press on to that national and international co-operation which is Socialism.

Having thus taken pains to differentiate between all kinds of social reform—even that which is Socialistic in principle—and Socialism, Mr. Devas proceeds to argue that Socialism "is a very bad remedy, and thus that it is not merely insidious but *impracticable*."

This is rather like the case of the advocate who, after giving a number of elaborate reasons for not being able to call a certain witness, explained that it was impossible for him to do so because the man was dead. If Socialism is impracticable it was scarcely worth while for Mr. Devas to endeavour to show that it is a bad and insidious remedy. If it is impracticable it is no remedy at all—good, bad or indifferent. In support of this charge that Socialism is impracticable, Mr. Devas urges the "seemingly insuperable difficulties" of organising all the various industries of the country under collective national control. He loses sight of the fact that collective ownership and control is the rule in practically all industries to-day. In some of the great trustified businesses almost every industry is undertaken. Our railway companies, for instance, not only undertake railway traffic, they are engine, coach and carriage builders; house-builders, tailors, printers, iron-founders; carpenters and bricklayers; ship-owners, shipping and cartage contractors; omnibus and motor car proprietors and contractors; refreshment caterers, etc. All industries tend to trustification, and the trustified industry is the highest form of industrial organisation short of public collectivism.

We have collectivism now; a highly-developed form of industrial organisation in which the capitalist, as such, has ceased to perform any useful function. All that is necessary is to socialise this collective organisation, to place it under public control, and direct it to social ends, to divert it from profit-making to public, social service. It makes one smile to hear of the difficulties of

collective organisation. The capitalists are smoothing those difficulties out of our way very nicely.

Mr. Devas reduces the difficulties which constitute the *impracticability* of Socialism to five. The first, with which I have already dealt, "the difficulty of organising work ; secondly, the difficulty of supplying different wants ; thirdly, the difficulty of assigning different employments ; fourthly, the difficulty of assigning remuneration ; and, lastly, the difficulty of supplying a stimulating motive to work." A veritable hill of difficulty for the Socialist pilgrim !

Of the difficulty of supplying different wants, Mr. Devas says : " A man's individuality, and let me say still more a woman's individuality, must be sacrificed ; there is no room for peculiarities, idiosyncrasies, individual requirements. No doubt the ordinary food, the ordinary clothing, ordinary furniture, ordinary houses, ordinary amusements, you could get by presenting a labour-ticket at the Government stores, or in whatever way distribution was managed ; but all production would be wholesale, on a large scale, after an official pattern ; instead of facing a body of producers and sellers eager to cater for every separate want, you would face an official body to whom any fresh want would mean more trouble and more brain work, with no prospect of private profit as an incentive ; and thus you would seek in vain to procure what would be out of the routine of Government production ; the practical consequence would be that grown men and women would be assimilated to boys or girls at a boarding school, and we must all be as soldiers with barrack-room uniformity. There could be no genuine liberty of consumption."

If, instead of illustrating "the difficulty of supplying different wants" under Socialism, Mr. Devas had wished to depict the "liberty of consumption" under the present system, he could scarcely have done better than in the above paragraph. Practically all production to-day is "wholesale, on a large scale, after an official pattern." Where is the "room for peculiarities, idiosyncrasies, individual requirements" ? Take our dwellings—brick and tile boxes, thousands of them, tens of thousands, all alike, placed side by side, row after row, in miles and miles of mean streets. What "liberty of consumption" is there for us nowadays in the matter of a dwelling-place ?

The same with our food, our clothes, our furniture ; in none of these matters is it a question to-day of those who supply them being "eager to cater for every separate want." We simply have to take what the market provides. Even those members of modern society who are rich enough to exercise any choice at all, find their choice, even in such intimately personal matters as food, dress, and amusements, narrowly circumscribed by fashion and

convention, as well as by the fact that production is on a whole-sale scale, and that to get anything to suit an individual taste involves an infinity of trouble and expense, even if it is not impossible altogether, by reason of the fact that "such things are not made now."

Mr. Devas is good enough to admit that "no doubt the ordinary food, the ordinary clothing, ordinary furniture," etc., could be got by everybody under Socialism, and that, surely, would be a vast improvement on present conditions, in which millions find a difficulty in obtaining even these ordinary things, and none but the very wealthy can gratify individual tastes in these matters. But that is not all. With production carried on for use and not for profit, there would not be the waste of labour and of material which goes on to-day. It would be to the interest of everybody that everything produced should be of the best—the most useful and most durable of its kind. Nowadays, the interest of the producer, producing for profit, lies in the speedy destruction of the product. For the tailor, the sooner the suit of clothes he has made is worn out, the better, because the sooner will he be employed in making another. That holds good throughout all departments of industry and as a consequence we have shoddy clothing, jerry-built dwellings, adulterated food—Chicago embalmed meat and so on—not because anybody really wants these things, but because it pays to produce them. Under capitalism it "pays" the producers for profit to poison the community, whose "liberty of consumption" consists in accepting these shoddy, adulterated, poisoned, jerry-built commodities, or going without altogether. Under Socialism, where all would be producers and none would produce for profit, it would not "pay" anyone to produce bad or rotten things. On the contrary, the better, the more useful and the more lasting everything was, the better it would be for all, producers and consumers alike. As consumers, the people would find their needs fully satisfied, and as producers, through the economy of labour, they would have ample leisure in which to cultivate individual tastes and idiosyncrasies, and to devise means, and design products, for their gratification.

Mr. Devas's "third difficulty" is "the assignment of different employments"; and, he says, "we ask in vain, How can it be done?" But Mr. Devas is a little too previous with his cry of despair. So far from the question "How can it be done?" having been asked in vain, I may mention here that our good friend John Richardson has written a little book in reply to that very question; and I heartily recommend "How it Can be Done," by John Richardson, to Mr. Devas's attention.

Of course, our friend Richardson, no more than any other Socialist, does not dogmatise and say how it will be done; he simply suggests how it might be done; and it is necessary to say

here that the industrial organisation of future society must, necessarily, be the business of the people of that society. We cannot dictate to them and say that it shall be done in this or that way. We can only say now that there are various ways which suggest themselves to our minds, all of which may be modified by future circumstances, and none of which may be adopted quite in the fashion in which it presents itself to us.

Mr. Devas finds that "For everyone to take turn and turn about at every trade is so appalling a waste of power, so great a violation of division of labour, as to be out of the question; to choose what you like best is to leave undone necessary employments that are liked the least, to give a greater reward to the rough unpleasant task is to depreciate the higher and more delicate tasks; the chimney-sweep or scavenger would get more than the physician or schoolmaster."

The readiest answer to the question which Mr. Devas says "We ask in vain," lies in the last sentence of the above paragraph. Why should not the chimney-sweep or the scavenger get more than, or at least as much as, the physician or the schoolmaster, seeing that the service rendered by the one is as important to society as that rendered by the other? If the "rough, unpleasant tasks" of the chimney-sweep and the scavenger are so much more objectionable than the "higher and more delicate tasks" of the physician or schoolmaster, that, surely, is a reason why they should be better and not worse paid.

Why is it that they are worse paid to-day? Simply because advantage is taken of their economic helplessness—their poverty—to compel them to do dirty, disagreeable work, which their masters shun; and the same poverty which compels them to accept these "rough, unpleasant tasks" also compels them to accept the lowest remuneration for them.

The performance of these "rough, unpleasant tasks" is at least as necessary for society as the work of the physician and the schoolmaster. In modern society the master class, and those who monopolise the "higher and more delicate tasks," find a class of poverty-stricken creatures—propertyless, disinherited, homeless, landless men and women—a proletariat, eager to perform these tasks, and competing with each other for the opportunity to perform them—disagreeable as they are—for such a pittance as will keep them alive. This poverty, this propertylessness, is the driving force, the slave-driver's whip, of the modern slavery. Mr. Devas, and the class for whom he speaks, regard the existence of this proletariat, condemned by poverty to do their dirty work for them, and to do it cheap, as one of the most beneficent dispensations of Divine Providence. And they all ask in dismay—and that is what Mr. Devas's "difficulty" comes to—"Who would do this dirty work if none were so poor as to be compelled to do

it for a subsistence?" And the question supplies its own answer. If there were no proletariat; if there were none but well-to-do members of society; then these well-to-do members would have to perform the necessary rough and unpleasant tasks themselves—either by each taking a turn, or by casting lots, or by giving special inducements to volunteers.

Just consider the absurdity of Mr. Devas's position—"To choose what you like best is to leave undone necessary employments that are liked the least," and yet it is monstrous that those who undertake these "necessary employments" should "get more" than those who perform the "higher and more delicate tasks," which he assumes we should all prefer! It is as though I should say that, instead of passing one of the bright, warm days of summer in the heat, and toil, and noise, and dirt of a factory, I would prefer to spend it on the river, say, or in a beautiful park, yet I thought it unfair that anyone should be paid more for working in a factory than I received for loafing on the river or in the park!

Yet that is the contradictory attitude adopted by most of our opponents in this connection. They say: "Under Socialism, when all would be free, nobody would want to do the hard and dirty work, all would want to be foremen, or overseers, and bosses," thereby implying that the position of foreman, overseer, or boss, was by far the more desirable one. Yet in the same breath they defend the greater remuneration—in an ascending scale—received by foremen, overseer, and boss, on the ground that no one would accept these arduous posts unless they were more highly paid!

Of two things, one—either these posts are much more desirable in themselves than the position of a mere worker, or they are not. If they are, there is likely to be competition for them, and no extra remuneration is called for; and if they are not, they will certainly not be sought after, and extra remuneration may be necessary. But they cannot be both desirable and undesirable at the same time.

And that is how this stupendous difficulty—this question which Mr. Devas says, "we ask in vain"—may, I do not say will, be answered in future society. It would be the operation of the old law of supply and demand, only on a different plane and without the poverty basis. In those occupations which were greatly sought after the remuneration might be reduced, in those to which most people were averse the reward might be proportionately greater.

Mr. Devas complains that "the Socialist leaders shrink from publishing any practical details of the future Socialist State, and evade practical criticisms by keeping to generalities." But it is not that they "shrink" from anything of the kind; it is simply

that it is no part of their duty. It is comparatively easy to construct a social organisation, in theory, to the smallest detail. That has been done by Utopians from Plato to Bellamy. It is easy to say how the affairs of future society may be arranged, but beyond that we are not called upon to go. We cannot say how they will be arranged. But we know that given a new basis the society existing thereon will adapt itself to the new conditions, and that the details will arrange themselves in accordance therewith.

We know further, that in these new conditions much that is now greatly esteemed will be of little worth, occupations which are now sought after will be gone altogether. Education will be universal and the unskilled man or woman will be as extinct as the illiterate. The industrial organisation of the community being directed to supplying the common wants, to ministering to the universal well-being, and not to the production of profit, all useless labour will be abolished; all dangerous trades which are not absolutely necessary will be suppressed, and in those which cannot be suppressed altogether the work will be rendered as healthy and light as possible. Then, too, for the first time, the application of machinery to production will perform its proper function—that of reducing necessary toil to a minimum. As a consequence there will be very little really disagreeable work and no drudgery at all. The great bulk of the necessary work, involving no exhaustive, body-and-soul-destroying drudgery, will be pleasant and attractive, and, being common to all and implying no class inferiority or degradation, it will be regarded as a blessing, a pleasure, and a recreation rather than as something to be avoided.

Added to this, with the universality of education as well as the improved methods of industry and the vastly better conditions of life, the general health, both mental and physical, will be so much better than now that the functions of the physician and the schoolmaster may well become far less important than they are to-day. It is easy to conceive that a knowledge of medicine, as well as other education, may become so general that, with the elimination of the chief causes of disease, greater leisure, and a higher standard of education altogether, the teaching of the young and the tending of the sick may be undertaken voluntarily by anybody, and cease to be the functions of a specialised class.

Sceptics may argue that this latter suggestion is absurd, and that in any state of society physicians and schoolmasters would be necessary, as their duties require years of work and of careful training. I am not dogmatising, and have no wish to do so. I merely point out that, while it would be quite easy to draw up a complete plan for the organisation of future society, it is quite useless to do so, because the change in economic conditions would necessarily produce so many modifications in human relations generally that we can only to a modified extent conjecture the immense changes that would manifest themselves in the general organisation of society.

The point to be borne in mind is that, with the industrial organisation devoted to the satisfaction of the needs of the community instead of the production of profit, wealth would be so great that there would be more than plenty for everybody, and work would be light and pleasant ; so there would be no difficulty in setting free any individuals, who might show special aptitude for special study, or work, in any direction in which this was found to be necessary. What strikes anyone most in regard to the drive and drudgery of to-day, the dirt and squalor, wretchedness, want and misery, the care, worry and suffering, is the utter absurdity of it all. It is so silly, so futile, so absolutely unnecessary, that one wonders how it can go on, and cannot but laugh at those who see insuperable difficulties in the way of any more rational social organisation.

As to Mr. Devas's fourth difficulty, "the assignment of remuneration," but a few words are necessary. At first, it may be there will be difficulties, and these will probably increase and multiply with the increased production, so long as the wages-system is continued. But the growth of these difficulties side by side with the growth of wealth, and the practical impossibility of valuing the individual share of social products, will demonstrate the absurdity of the wages system, and that will go by the board. Where everyone has enough and to spare none will want more, and if they do they can have it. There will be no difficulty on that score, eventually, when wealth as well as production is completely socialised.

This brings me to the last difficulty advanced by Mr. Devas—that "of supplying a motive."

"Lastly, but not least," says Mr. Devas, "comes the difficulty of supplying a motive." He talks of the "order and punctuality, the incessant and strenuous labour, the keen eye for technical improvement, the watch for markets, that is stimulated by the fear of dismissal on the part of the employed, or bankruptcy on the part of the employers, and by the hope of advancement and enrichment on the part of both."

This shows a lamentable lack of appreciation of the changes which Socialism would produce. Nevertheless, Mr. Devas is good enough to admit that "in the Socialist State there could be neither dismissal nor bankruptcy to fear"—which would be something to be thankful for, anyway—"and the honours and rewards that might be held out to the industrious and inventive would be a shadowy reward compared with the substantial gains that our present social arrangements do not indeed always give (alas! far from it), but at least hold out as an allurement."

The parenthesis is Mr. Devas's own, and thus we have it that, taking promises with performance, the "rewards that might be held out to the industrious and inventive" under Socialism would

not really be more shadowy than those the industrious and inventive receive to-day, but they might be less "alluring." "I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word." 'Tis a pretty word, that, "allurement." And it fills the bill. That is precisely what—and all—"the substantial gains" held out to "the industrious and inventive" in our present "social arrangements" really amount to.

What is the incentive to industry to-day? Men are compelled to work—poor men, that is to say, are compelled to work—in order to live, but neither the poverty which compels them to work, nor the wages which they receive as their reward, is any incentive to industry, while as to the "fear of dismissal," that is as often an incentive to idleness as to diligence.

With our present social arrangements, in which those who work the hardest fare the worst; have the lowest pay; live in the meanest houses and the vilest streets; have the poorest and most scanty food; the worst and scantiest clothing; it can scarcely be said that there is much of an incentive to people to work. On the other hand, the fact that it is their very industry which throws men out of employment, and the sooner they get any job finished the sooner they will be out of work, is sufficient to show that under present conditions, whatever may be the "allurement" by which men are induced to work, there is no incentive to industry.

The same with invention. There is no incentive to the inventor to-day. The capitalist reaps all the advantage of the invention and pockets all the profits resulting from its application; the workers suffer all the loss. Many a man working in a factory has seen where some slight alteration in the machinery would mean a great saving of labour; but he has refrained from suggesting the change, because he has known full well that it would only mean that a certain number of the "hands" would be "put off"; and if he, himself, were included it would not be at all wonderful as one of the "substantial gains" held out as an "allurement" to the inventor by our "present social arrangements."

In our present social arrangements there is really no inducement to men to be industrious, inventive, frugal, or thrifty. The incentive is all the other way. We live to-day by waste and extravagance. People may be compelled to work by sheer necessity, but the very necessity which compels them to work is an incentive to them not to be industrious, because too great industry would deprive them of the opportunity of working.

Under Socialism, it would be entirely different. All would have to work, because work is necessary to supply human needs; but the work would not be an end in itself, but the means to the end, that end being the common well-being. And in that would lie the motive. Because the more industrious every member of the community was, the better it would be for everybody. Now

the more industrious a man is the sooner he is out of work, the more he produces the greater the poverty of him and his class. Then, the more a man produces the better it will be for everybody. That is the motive which Socialism will supply, a motive which is entirely absent from our present social conditions, with all their "allurement."

So, too, with inventions. As Mill says, "It is doubtful if all the mechanical inventions that the world has ever seen have lightened the day's toil of a single human being." But it is also beyond a doubt that few inventors themselves have reaped any reward for their inventions. The reward for the invention, as well as the profit accruing from its application, has gone to the capitalist class—the inventor has found it more "alluring" than "substantial." Under Socialism, however, where every labour-saving appliance, every mechanical invention, would increase the treasure and leisure of the whole community, the inventor would confer a blessing on humanity and would be welcomed as a benefactor of mankind. And if this and the knowledge that at last mechanical invention was going to prove a blessing, and not a curse to the human race—if this were not sufficient "motive" to the inventor, society could easily afford to give him other rewards in view of the fact that his invention was of general benefit, and was not merely a means of enriching a few at the expense of the many.

That brings us to the end of the "difficulties" which, according to Mr. Devas, constitute the impracticability of Socialism. I have dealt pretty fully with these, and have shown that from that standpoint Socialism is not only not impracticable, but is really less so than the present system.

Mr. Devas has, however, other objections to Socialism. Having maintained, and I suppose, proved to his own satisfaction, that Socialism "is not merely insidious but impracticable," with which objections I have already dealt, he objects that Socialism is not only "*insidious and impracticable*," but is exposed to a third and graver charge of being immoral."

I have no doubt that Socialism is exposed to such a charge. I imagine that is a charge to which any theory or set of principles is exposed; but how does Mr. Devas sustain this charge. He says that the immorality of Socialism lies in "being opposed to that solid family life which is the very pivot of morality and happiness."

Mr. Devas, however, says that he has no doubt that such a charge "will be indignantly repudiated." I should say so, indeed. But before concerning myself with any indignant repudiation of the charge that Socialism is "opposed to that solid family life which

is the very pivot of morality and of happiness," it would be interesting to know where this pivot is to be found. When, however, we come to inquire after this "pivot of morality and of happiness," which Socialism is intent upon destroying, Mr. Devas has to hedge. He finds the "pivot" in a bad state of decay. He says, "I know indeed full well that there is much highly injurious to family life in the present condition of things, especially in the work of married women away from their homes, and in the miserable dwellings of so many of our people; for example, the overcrowded tenements of the jute-workers in Dundee, that make the name of 'home' a mockery."

Now I am prepared to say that for the great majority of the working class the words "family" and "home" are, "in the present condition of things" ghastly mockeries. But it is "the present condition of things" that Socialism is concerned in attacking, and Mr. Devas is defending. We Socialists claim that Socialism is the only way out of "the present condition of things" in which, as Mr. Devas admits, the "pivot of morality and of happiness" is a mockery for tens of thousands of human beings. But to our claim Mr. Devas says that it "might have seemed plausible in mid-nineteenth century," but is "not plausible now, since for more than fifty years 'business principles' of self-regarding individuals have been checked, pruned, amended by the two great forces of combination and legislation; a whole code of elaborate factory laws has grown up, etc." And yet, in spite of this fifty years of "checking," "pruning," "amending," and legislating, we have still the "present condition of things" in which "the pivot of morality and of happiness" is a sham and a mockery for the great majority of the working people.

And what does Mr. Devas propose in order to restore this "pivot"? He simply says that its absence "is a reason why everyone of us should be eager for the social reform that will mend or mitigate these evils." But surely after the failure of fifty years of checking and pruning and amending, it should be evident, even to Mr. Devas, that mere social reform will not mend or mitigate these evils, and that they can only be got rid of by abolishing their cause—that is, by destroying the class ownership of the means of production, by which one class is enabled to live in ease and luxury by the robbery of the great body of the people.

That is the fundamental cause of "the present condition of things," the great immorality—if it comes to talking about morality.

There is nothing which its worst enemies could urge against Socialism on the ground of immorality, which would not lie with ten-fold force against the present system. Why, that system is founded on fraud and immorality. It only exists by cheating, swindling, robbery and murder. What is successful business

but cheating? What is the whole basis of capitalist industry but the use of the means of production, not for the legitimate end of producing wealth for use, but for the purpose of making profit for the few by despoiling, sweating, pillaging, and murdering the many?

But now as to the attitude of Socialism towards the family. Mr. Devas admits that this "pivot of morality and of happiness" is in a somewhat parlous state, in "the present condition of things," so far as great masses of the people are concerned. But, he says, we should seek to remedy these evils by social reforms—as if we had not tried that, as he himself points out, for half a century and more—and not endeavour "to mend them by doing away with the very home we are seeking to preserve or restore. And yet this," he says, "is precisely what Socialism does."

I should like to see Mr. Devas's warrant for such a statement. That Socialism, by ensuring a full and happy life for all, so far as material conditions can ensure that, will produce many modifications in our social relations, must be obvious. That it will induce a broader view of the duty of men and women to each other, and of social life generally, as opposed to the narrow view of one's own home and family, as a social citadel and entity in antagonism to the rest of mankind, is, I should imagine, also beyond question. But that it will conserve all that is best in present social relations, in the family and in the home, there can be no doubt whatever. Present conditions, where they do not destroy the family and ruin the home utterly and completely, only maintain them in their worst form, and conserve their worst and most vicious characteristics. The very phrases, "family considerations," and "family interests," have come to be by-words representing nepotism, jobbery and corruption. Under Socialism, family relations would manifest themselves in mutual affection only, and not in supporting the material interests of particular individuals, to the detriment of the rest of the community.

Mr. Devas indulges in a lot of word-spinning about the "sacred union of man and woman for mutual help, for educating and supporting the children . . . the true and healthy communion, that of the home"; all of which, he says, "becomes imaginary and impossible where the Socialist State provides for the nourishment and education and technical training and material and moral outfit of each child." All this, and more of the same kind, is sheer nonsense, and Mr. Devas knows that it is nonsense. He is not so ignorant as he here pretends. Where are the parents who to-day provide the nourishment and education and training and material and moral outfit for their children? What parents educate their own children? What parents, for that matter,

house and feed their own children? The children of the wealthy, who alone are fed, clothed, housed, and educated properly, are fed, clothed, housed, and educated by people other than their parents, and at the earliest opportunity are thrust out of that home and family life which is the "pivot," etc., into the public school or the convent. The children of the poor, on the other hand, are ill-fed, ill-clothed, badly housed, and not educated. They know little of the blessings of home, or of the parents' fostering care, and what little learning they get is certainly not given by their parents.

Mr. Devas is a Catholic and is writing on behalf of the Catholic Church, and he knows how jealous is that Church of her claims and powers over the children, and how little she is concerned with the rights of the parents in this connection, or with the "sacred enclosure of home."

Under Socialism, on the other hand, where all would have ample material comfort and plenty of leisure, as well as the means of education, there would be no reason whatever why the parents should not educate their own children; which is quite impossible in "the present condition of things."

As to "the sacred union of man and woman for mutual help," Mr. Devas knows perfectly well that that is in innumerable cases a ghastly mockery to-day. In the "present condition of things" this so-called sacred union is often nothing but a form of prostitution; a form of prostitution which, albeit entered upon with the blessing of Holy Mother Church, is, if anything, worse than that which is whisperingly spoken of as "*the social evil*."

Only when men and women are economically free and equal can the union between a man and a woman be a "sacred" one, based solely upon mutual affection and entered into for "mutual help" and comradeship. It is only under Socialism that men and women will be economically free and equal. Only under Socialism, therefore, will a "sacred union" between man and woman be universally possible, and prostitution, in all its forms, disappear.

Mr. Devas is quite right in saying that Socialism is hostile to small properties. As a matter of economic evolution, small properties will have to go. But, viewed from an ethical standpoint, surely nothing has been more conducive to the development of the worst side of human nature—of "hatred, malice and all uncharitableness"—than the system of small properties. It is remarkable—or, rather, it would be remarkable did we not know the real cause of the hostility to Socialism—to have anyone championing the system of small properties as though it embraced all the social virtues. If, however, Mr. Devas thinks that the feature of the home is a "true and healthy communism," it might reasonably be asked why he should object to this true and healthy communism becoming more wide-spread and all-embracing.

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